

VA CHICAGO LINKS

VA Chicago May be Renamed to Honor Former Secretary

The Health Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee has approved a bill to rename VA Chicago after the Honorable Jesse Brown, the Secretary for Veterans Affairs during 1993 – 97.

The bill now moves to the full Committee for consideration and action. It has been endorsed by all of the major veterans' organizations in the Chicago area.

Congressman Danny Davis, who represents the district in which West Side is located, introduced the bill. It is co-sponsored by Congressman Lane Evans, the Ranking Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

"Jesse Brown represented the best of the 'I Can' spirit," says Congressman Davis. "A veteran, war hero, exemplary leader, insightful, charismatic, passionate and dedicated to service."

Mental Health Month

VA Chicago's Mental Health Service Line has scheduled the following Relaxation Workshops:

- * Thursday, May 15 from 2 to 3 pm in the WS auditorium. Presented by Dr. Michael Flynn.
- * Friday, May 23 from 2 to 3 pm in Lakeside room 617-D. Presented by Dr. Susan Payvar.

VA Part of National Disaster Drill

The scenario is that an imaginary terrorist group called GLODO will set off a "dirty bomb" in downtown Seattle and a biological weapons attack in Chicago. VA Chicago and other medical institutions within the city may be flooded with fake "casualties."

Fortunately, it is only a test, but the VA and 18 other federal agencies staging this national disaster drill (known as TOPOFF 2 because of the numerous top officials participating) hope it will help emergency responders prepare for any real terrorist attacks in the future.

TOPOFF 2, organized by the Homeland Security and State departments, is scheduled for May 12 through 16. It is the first large-scale homeland security drill since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. "Casualties" at VA Chicago are primarily expected on Tuesday, May 13 and Wednesday, May 14.

Although the exercise is planned to be as realistic as possible, VA employees should keep in mind that events in the drill are purely hypothetical. No harmful biological or chemical agents will be released and the locations and methods of attack simulated are not based on actual intelligence information.

Interim Parking News

VA Chicago's request for additional parking in its interim lot at the West Side campus has been approved by the Illinois Medical District, which has granted us an additional 30 spaces. It will help ease the congestion resulting from the movement of staff from Lakeside to West Side.

To improve safety, turning lanes have also been installed in the interim lot. These are clearly marked and employees should be careful not to park within the designated lanes. Vehicles parked illegally within the turning lanes will be towed. Staff should also be careful not to park in the lot's external perimeter outside of the fenced area. That area is not designated for VA parking and several employees have had their cars towed after parking there.

Employees are reminded that patients receive a priority for parking and that staff parking is on a first come first serve basis. It is not fair to employees waiting in line to park when staff members leaving the lot "hold" their parking space for use by their friends.

If the interim lot is filled, additional parking is available in the Juvenile Court Building for \$2 a day. Many federal employees have also taken advantage of the transit benefit program, which subsidizes public transportation costs up to \$100 a month.

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Parking (cont. from page 1)

Staff members remaining at Lakeside after the transition have been advised they will be able to continue paying the same negotiated rate for parking at the Erie Street garage after September, when the current agreement ends.

Construction of the parking facility at West Side is ahead of schedule and should be completed by December. In preparation for its opening, a Parking Committee is being established and VA Chicago is requesting employees to serve on it.

The Parking Committee will be tasked with developing guidelines and regulations to assure that parking will be provided in a safe, fair and orderly process. Guidelines developed will be used to prepare a Parking Handbook for distribution to all staff.

The Parking Committee will be limited to eight members. Employees willing to serve on it are asked to submit an e-mail request, through their service chiefs, to Michelle Blakely, Associate Director.

VISN Offers Leadership Development Program

Applications are being accepted until June 16 for Class #2 of the VISN 12 Leadership Development Program (VLDP).

The program was created to develop leaders capable of achieving high levels of individual and organizational performance to meet future needs within VA. Its focus is on developing leadership skills, as opposed to management or supervisory skills.

Up to 20 employees within VISN 12 will be selected for the program. Appropriate applicants must be GS 11-14 or Wage Grade/Title 38 equivalents and have demonstrated potential for expanded leadership roles. Those selected will attend three weeklong sessions and participate in assigned independent study.

VA Chicago staff accepted in the initial leadership development program included Dr. David Barch, ACOS for Research; Craig Howard, Administrative Officer, Medical Service; Margaret (Chris) Johnson, Chief, N&FS; Dr. Janet Kamer, Clinical Psychologist; Jolie Rubin, Assistant Chief, N&FS; Kathryn Powell, Nurse Practitioner; Lynette Taylor, Nurse Recruiter; Mary Toles, Nurse Practitioner; and Dr. Mark Zerwic, Acting Chief, Psychology Service.

Copies of the application packet and additional information can be found on the VISN 12 web site. Staff with other questions about the program can contact Mike Huck, VISN 12 Education Officer, at extension 56204.

Kudos

Judges from the VA National Creative Arts Festival have selected entries from two VA Chicago veterans as among the top three pieces of work submitted in their categories. **Thomas O'Connor** placed within the top three in the Leather Crafts category and **Dale Page** placed within the top three in the Needlework category. Another panel of judges will determine if they will be awarded gold, silver or bronze medals.

Matthew Garoufalis, DPM, a member of the Podiatry Section at West Side, has been elected to the Board of Trustees of the American Podiatric Medical Association. He has represented Illinois in the APMA House of Delegates since 1997 and currently serves on its Health Policy Committee. The APMA is the nation's leading professional society for foot and ankle specialists, with a membership of over 11,000 doctors of podiatric medicine.

Mark Your Calendar

May 20 – National Asian Pacific-American Heritage Month Celebration. 10:30 am in the West Side Auditorium, with pic-tel to Lakeside and Crown Point.

May 24 – VA Chicago Walk-A-Thon, in conjunction with City of Chicago annual Memorial Day Parade. For information, call extension 53989.